

PROBLEMS GALORE FOR WANDERERS

WYCOMBE Wanderers' lack of forward power was clearly evident again on Tuesday night when they went down to Witney Town in their second pre-season friendly.

In contrast to Saturday's 2-2 draw with Bedford, when there were many promising signs from the Blues' performance, this display did little to encourage supporters who had made the journey to the Southern League Division 1 (North) club.

Such was the weakness upfront that Wycombe did not have a single shot on target throughout the first half and only twice in the second did they threaten to equalise the home side's eighth minute lead. Goalkeeper Keith Baker's only save, in fact, was made in the dying seconds from Tony Horseman and apart from that he was virtually redundant.

Over the years, Wanderers have prided themselves on the ability to create scoring chances but on Tuesday night, they were bereft of ideas. This must be most worrying for manager John Reardon, who knows only too well the need for new forwards.

Whereas only the front three struggled against Bedford on Saturday, here both the forwards and midfield players were up against it which meant a torrid time for Wycombe's experienced back four. It must have been exasperating to see the ball played upfield and then returned via a Witney boot almost immediately.

By **STUART EARP** Witney Town 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0

It was only after half time that Wycombe took anything like a grip on the game but even then, they were unable to prise open Witney's strong defence.

One of the main causes of Wanderers' problems was Witney's non-stop harassing tactics. None of the Wycombe players were given time or space to play the ball and the Blues were chased into the ground throughout the first 45 minutes. Wycombe weren't helped either by Witney's physical tactics at the back and the over-lenient refereeing of Mr Harris.

All this meant a totally frustrating 90 minutes for Wanderers, who fielded Saturday's team.

EX-OXFORD

Witney, who finished third in Division 1 (North) for the second year running last season, contained no fewer than seven former Oxford United players, including player-manager John Shuker at left back.

The writing was on the wall for Wanderers early on when the home side made all the running. Three crosses flew untouched across the face of goal before Witney opened their account after eight minutes from a set piece.

Dave Jones sent over an in-swinging corner and Bobby

Stokes, the burly Oxford City defender, was there to head the ball down and across the line. Paul Birdseye made a good effort to head clear but only found the roof of the net. Centre back Stokes was Town's top goalscorer last season.

With the ball bouncing high on a dry but well grassed pitch, Wycombe's defence were given a torrid time as Witney ran at them from all angles. Six more corners followed in the first half while Wanderers tried in vain to stem the tide. Goalkeeper John Maskell looked unsafe at times but with little going right in front of him, it was hardly surprising.

Time and again, Wycombe moves broke down long before they reached the penalty area and their lone hope of a goal came from a 32nd minute corner, which Witney cleared safely. Apart from that, there was not a single dangerous effort from the Blues throughout the half.

COHESION

Raising the tempo of their game after the break, Wanderers matched Witney's work rate for some time. They tightened up in midfield and there seemed more cohesion all-round throughout the team. Despite this, there was still an inability to create chances.

Witney reverted to playing long balls through Wycombe's

defence in a bid to avoid the off-side trap. Maskell came out to the edge of his area to twice gather the ball but after 68 minutes Derek Wise was put clean through by Mike MacFarlane. Only a beautifully timed tackle by Paul Birdseye prevented another goal.

With goalkeeper Baker still to be tested, Wanderers were unable to maintain the pace in the later stages of the half and many complicated moves were quickly broken down by the home back four.

Wanderers had two chances in the last 10 minutes. Once the disappointing Dylan Evans beat Stokes and had a clear run to goal. But with Kennedy pleading for the ball unmarked at the far post, the cross was too late in coming. Then, with only seconds left, Horseman produced a superb turn inside the box. He beat Alan Jeffries and finished well, but Baker pushed the ball away with an instinctive save.

On the 90 minutes, a Wycombe equaliser was scarcely deserved.

WITNEY: K. Baker; J. Light, A. Jeffries, T. Stokes, J. Shuker; W. Bailey, M. MacFarlane, R. Clark; D. Jones, D. Wise, M. Gilligan. Sub P. Bryant (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; H. Kennedy, G. Mackenzie, W. Roberts; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Brown (sub P. Conway 69 mins).

Half-time: 0-1. Goalscorer, Witney — Stokes (8).
Referee: R. Harris.



MIKE PRINCE
... new P.R.O.

Mike's new plans

WYCOMBE Wanderers have appointed a public relations officer. He is Mike Prince, who was elected on to the club committee at their recent A.G.M.

Mike, 39, has already announced exciting plans which includes spreading the name of the club further afield. He is particularly hoping to obtain coverage on Radio Oxford.

Mr Prince was the announcer at Wycombe all last season and this year he is hoping to entertain the supporters at Loakes Park with pre-recorded interviews with the players during the half time interval. This would replace the normal records during the break.

Record requests for supporters will be played before league matches, for birthdays, anniversaries etc but Mike will need a week's notice for this new venture.

Mr Prince, who is chief security officer at Molin, Princes Risborough, hopes also to be able to give supporters up to date information on club affairs. Match results and fixtures are already available on the ansafone service at Loakes Park but Mike welcomes other enquiries on Holmer Green 34108.



Queens Park Rangers full back Dave Clement, who brings down the full first team squad to Loakes Park tomorrow.

Rangers at full strength

QUEENS Park Rangers, fresh from winning a four-club tournament in Bruges last weekend, bring their full first team squad to Loakes Park tomorrow (Saturday) for a game against Wycombe Wanderers in aid of full back Dave Clement's testimonial year.

No fewer than nine of the squad are internationals. Gerry Francis, captain of England until hit by injury last season, Stan Bowles, Ian Gillard, John Hollins, Phil Parkes, Dave Thomas and beneficiary Clement have all played for England while Don Masson is a Scottish international and Don Givens a Republic of Ireland cap.

As well as making the wrong sort of news in Bruges, the colourful Stan Bowles scored two goals in Rangers' 3-1 win over A.E.K. Athens and the London club then went on to beat Derby County 2-1 to take the trophy. The prospect of seeing such players as Bowles, Parkes, Eastoe and Francis in action should ensure a large crowd at Loakes Park.

Rangers have pledged to bring down their full first team squad and with competition among the team extremely keen at present, they will be looking for a good performance before starting their Football League campaign with a home match against Aston Villa.

London-born Dave Clement has been granted a testimonial season after giving sterling service over the last ten years. He has played over 400 games for Rangers, scoring 25 goals and won five full England caps. This game is just one of several events planned for the year. Another includes an open day at Q.P.R.'s training ground on Sunday at 2 pm.

Faced with the full Rangers team, Wanderers will be hoping for an improved performance after a thoroughly disappointing game at Witney on Tuesday and they should have Mick Hollifield and John Priestley back after holidays.